

Scrapbook
by Elfpen

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Summary: A dumping ground for all of my HtTYD oneshots and drabbles that demand to be written but are too short for me to stick anywhere else. Genre, characters, and length will vary. Headcanons, ahoy!

1. Left Handed

He hated this, he really did. Hiccup could've easily written out a list of all the reasons he hated combat training. He'd thought about doing so several times, but he'd never actually done it, because it would've been pointless. Firstly, there was the fact that his father had ordered him into training and had appointed Astrid as his instructor - and Astrid held no qualms about breaking into Hiccup's house and pommelling him in his sleep if he didn't show bright and early at the arena. Secondly, Hiccup seemed to be the only Viking besides Fishlegs that valued logic over brawn, and even Fishlegs was growing less opposed to weapons training now that he was growing into his muscle and learning to use his bulk behind a hammer.

Hiccup wasn't so lucky. Sure, he was taller, now, taller than all the others, in fact. But no one noticed how tall he was because he was still painfully skinny. He had muscles, he would boast sometimes when they picked on him, he really did. But Hiccup's strength was the wiry kind, not the kind a Viking needed to launch an axe or swing a hammer.

He'd resigned himself long ago that he would never be a warrior like Astrid, never the heroic battle hero like his father. Hiccup's strength was in words and strategy. If anything, he would become Berk's first diplomat. Well, so long as he survived long enough to give it a shot.

"Ow!" He yowled pathetically when the broadside of Snotlout's sword smacked his hand again. It hurt his pride more than it hurt his hand, because Hiccup knew his cousin wasn't even trying. In fact, he looked pretty bored. Far too late, Hiccup tilted his sword up in a parry

that looked ridiculous because there was nothing to parry now that Snotlout's sword was in another place entirely.

"Come on, Hiccup, you fight like my Grandmother!" Astrid yelled at him, and Hiccup would've scowled if he'd felt it was worth it. Instead, he moved his sword back in between him and Snotlout, and could only think, you've already lost a foot, just don't let him take off your hand, too.

Snotlout lunged, swinging his heavy sword in quick but obvious moves. Hiccup was proud when he managed to block him three times before he was smacked on the wrist by the flat of Snotlout's blade. He hissed, and made a mental note to buy more bandages and salve from Thorn, the village healer. He'd need it in the morning.

"This is ridiculous," Snotlout said, "I can't do this all morning, Astrid, I came here to fight, not to swat at flies!" Hiccup simultaneously felt insulted and sympathetic. He actually felt bad that he couldn't give his cousin enough of a challenge. Apparently Astrid felt the same, because she heaved a heavy sigh and said,

"Alright, fine. If you can break up the twins, you can pair up with one of them. I'll take the other, and Hiccup, you can go practice on the bag." As his cousin and his girlfriend strolled over to tear the bickering Thorstons off of each other, Hiccup slouched, somewhere between feeling dejected and defiant, and shuffled over to the bag. It was a massive straw-filled burlap bag with armor strapped to it and an angry face painted at the top. He glared at the face for a moment. At least they don't expect anything from you, he told it silently before he began swinging.

His wrist felt like jelly no matter how hard he tried to hold it steady. His shield hand clenched around the leather bands, itching to help, but Astrid had already told him that a warrior relied on their offense as well as their defense. In other words, Hiccup couldn't hide behind a shield all the time. He had to constantly remind his shield arm to stay down. He mentally repeated what Astrid had been drilling into him: keep your core tight, the sword is an extension of your arm, move with your swing, let your shield be your balance, footwork, swing, parry, again.

But in the end, it was pointless how long he spent practicing, how many times Astrid told him how to move, how to swing, how to flick and twist and parry and strike. It wasn't his strength, it wasn't his lank, it wasn't even the fact that his left leg ended in a stump and a metal foot. It was all just Hiccup, doing his Hiccup job of making everyday Viking things look impossible.

Hiccup was, as ever, the most useless warrior of all.

After a while, the two sparring pairs finished with each other, but Hiccup didn't notice, so he kept swinging halfheartedly at the bag. As the rest of the teens took a breather, Astrid watched Hiccup keenly, trying to decide what she could possibly do with him to turn him into a passable warrior. Hiccup was tall and wiry, which wasn't in itself all that bad on a battlefield. Astrid herself had always been on the slender side of most warriors, but she'd never let it hinder her progress. Hiccup's real problem, she'd decided, was his incoordination. He looked awkward holding a weapon, like he wasn't

sure what to do with it, no matter how many times he'd been told, or shown how. The incoordination in itself was a mystery to Astrid, because Hiccup was a top-notch blacksmith and the best dragon rider on Berk. Both skills required stellar balance, fine motor skills, strength, and quick reflexes.

So why, by Thor, was he so completely hopeless at fighting?

The question rammed about in her head as she watched him, listlessly whacking at the straw bag at one end of the arena. Her eyes caught on his shield hand, which she could see as he moved forward and back. It was tight, and twitching. When he swung with his sword hand, his shield hand moved and stretched, as if it were trying to mime to its twin in an effort to help. Astrid looked back to Tuffnut and Ruffnut, who'd already abandoned their water canteens in favor of more fighting. She watched both of their shield hands closely. Relaxed, steady, clenching only when a defensive move called for action. She glanced back at Hiccup, whose shield hand twisted unconsciously around in the handles. She glanced at his face, and wondered if he knew what his left hand was doing. She looked then to his right hand, clumsy and unbalanced as it darted about, trying and failing to swing a proper blow.

Rather abruptly, Astrid remembered how Hiccup used his left hand for everything. Writing, hammering, eating, carrying things. He opened doors with his left hand, buckled the straps on Toothless' saddle with his left hand, he even used his left hand to turn book pages. She blinked, feeling stupid for not haven't noticed it weeks earlier.

"Alright," She said to the crew, her voice loud and no-nonsense. "Pair up. Fishlegs, go with Tuff. Ruff, you'll be with me. And Snotlout, you'll be with Hiccup.

Snotlout groaned. Hiccup sighed, because he couldn't blame him. Resigned to his fate (and a few more bruises) Hiccup dragged himself away from the bag and stood waiting for Snotlout. His cousin scowled as he approached. "Alright," He said, "If you want another beating, we might as well get this over with." His nonchalance was somehow even worse than his usual taunting.

"Wait," Astrid surprised them both when she stepped in before they could start hacking at each other. Without a word, she stepped over to Hiccup, grabbed the edge of his shield, and yanked.

"Hey!" Hiccup said, because it actually hurt. "Astrid, what are you—" She'd taken his sword away, too, only to shove it into his left hand. She took his right arm and stuffed it into the shield straps. She manhandled his limbs into a fighter's stance before stepping back.

"Alright," She said, crossing her arms, "go ahead."

Hiccup and Snotlout both looked at her as though she'd gone mad, but she just glared at them, and eventually gave a gruff, "Well? Get on with it!" at which point Hiccup cocked a sarcastic yeah, that'll help eyebrow and Snotlout fidgeted to balance himself.

Snotlout went for the first hit, of course, and Hiccup parried him. One, two, three hits, and Hiccup was stepping backwards as Snotlout

pressed his offensive. Then, something happened that had never happened before in recorded history. Hiccup saw an opening, and took it, stepping forward into Snotlout's swing. By closing the distance as the bigger boy struck, Hiccup caught his cousin by surprise. His block hit right at the tang of Snotlout's blade, and with a flick Hiccup's wrist, Snotlout's weapon went clattering to the ground.

Nobody moved. Haddock and Jorgenson stared at the grounded blade in equal disbelief. Where neither of them were looking, Astrid allowed a sly grin to overcome her face.

"Left handed," she offered eventually, as the boys continued to stare. "Sorry I didn't notice sooner, Hiccup."

Both boys looked up at her, slack-jawed. They looked at each other, and then back at the sword, and then back at Astrid. Out of his surprise, Hiccup beamed at her. She smirked back at him, and spared Snotlout a good luck with him now glance. "Winner faces me next," She told them, and with that, she scooped up her shield, heaved up her axe and sauntered away. "Alright, Ruff, time for my axe to split your skull."

"In your dreams, Hofferson!"

The boys watched her go before Snotlout turned around to look at his cousin. He glanced apprehensively at Hiccup's left hand, which was now holding a sword. "Alright, fine, but you cannot be better at this than me, okay?" He growled, his eyes suddenly revealing that he saw Hiccup as a rising threat.

Hiccup shrugged with an incredulous little squeak, because he didn't want to be better, not really. He just wanted to escape with all three-and-a-half of his limbs still intact and a passable ability to keep himself alive.

After two more rounds and a few successfully bruise-worthy hits on Snotlout, Hiccup's eyes wandered over to Astrid, admiration spreading across his face. She really was a battle-savvy shieldmaiden, wasn't she? Even for shields that didn't belong to her. Although I don't think I would really mind if my shield belonged to her In his distraction, Hiccup didn't see his cousin raising his sword.

"Alright, loverboy," An angry Snotlout snarled, "you ogle, I'll pommel." Snotlout lunged, and Hiccup yelped.

Astrid had heard them, and snorted to herself. She'd have to teach Hiccup not to be distractible on the battlefield. But then, not all combat lessons could be taught in one day.

2. Secret

Berk was small, Vikings were talkative, and it was a general rule to never tell anyone anything unless you wanted the entire village to know by lunch.

Astrid wasn't upset by the news not in the least. But she knew that once it got out, no one would give her a moment to think before

storming her house and bombarding her with questions and congratulations, and she needed a day or two to absorb the news for herself. So, as a mutual pact between herself, her husband, her father in law, and the village midwife, Astrid's pregnancy would be kept quiet for the time being.

Well. At least, they would try to keep it quiet.

After seeing how he managed with Toothless during dragon training years ago, Astrid thought that Hiccup would've been a secret-keeping genius. But from the moment she'd informed him that he was going to be a father, all subtlety had flown out the window. He tried to keep cool, he really did. But he just couldn't stop smiling that stupid, goofy grin of his, not even when he went out in public, not even when people asked him why he was smiling and he couldn't answer. He watched Astrid constantly, and not the sort of admiring, flattering looks that married couples sometimes give each other — this was the constant, neck-tickling staring that made Astrid want to whirl around and slap him. They hadn't even known about the child for more than a week, and Astrid's stomach was still as flat as a board, but Hiccup had already started doting. Astrid was sure she would kill him before the first trimester was up.

Stoick watched the couple from a distance in equal parts amusement and surprise. Since the day they'd been married, Stoick and everyone else on Berk had begun making predictions about the future Haddock children. Hiccup, it was universally accepted, would make a good father, and would probably be more in-tune to the idea of children than his wife was. Astrid, on the other hand, was something of a question for most outsiders. She'd been aiming hard and fast for the life of a shieldmaiden for so long that, now that she was a wife, no one was sure how she would react to the possibility of having children. Stoick had been sure that she would come around eventually, probably with some persuasion from Hiccup, but she would probably be moody and confused for a while. Hiccup would take it all in stride, and not be fazed even when the children began to grow. It all made sense from what he knew of both of them, so of course Stoick never doubted his own predictions.

And then, it actually happened and all expectations went to Hel. Astrid was taking it quietly in stride, and it was Hiccup who was yanking at his hair, asking questions constantly, wondering out loud to the benefit of no one and already busying himself with designs for chairs, for toys, and a mechanical self-rocking crib. Astrid was quietly accepting what the next nine months held for her, and the years beyond, and it was Hiccup who was going crazy from uncertainty and excitement.

So the secret wouldn't stay secret for long — but not for lack of trying. Hiccup did actually try to keep his excitement in check so that he wouldn't blurt out the news to anyone who walked by. He went for flights on Toothless often (half of the time so he could rant to someone and not blow the secret, half the time because Astrid was sick of him being around to pester her with doting) and spent enough time in his workshop that he didn't see enough people for talking about it to be a temptation. He did try, and insofar as it concerned not letting anyone know that there was going to be a baby in the Haddock house, he was successful. But as a direct result of Hiccup's way of dealing with things, an unforeseen complication arose in the 'keep the baby a secret' plan:

Astrid couldn't stand him.

She knew it was because he couldn't vent, and she knew that, given a few weeks, he would settle into the idea and thereafter become the best father a mother could ask for her children. However, in the interim, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the third was, perhaps, the most annoying human being Astrid had ever had the misfortune to meet, and her irritation showed. It was a buildup of the little things: the staring, the mumbling, the goofy smiling, the questions. The way he put his hand over her stomach (flat as it was) when they lay down together at night would've been endearing, but combined with everything else, it only made Astrid roll her eyes, because she just wanted him to act normal for a few hours, for Odin's sake. By day eleven of their secret-keeping endeavor, Astrid was ready to call it quits for annoyance. It was also on day eleven that Ruffnut noticed that something was up.

Ruffnut was hardly an optimal effeminate companion, but as far as Viking women went, Ruffnut was understanding, perceptive, and practically impossible to embarrass or scare away, and so, was decent enough for girl-talk when Astrid needed it.

But not right now.

"By Thor, Astrid, who spit in your mead?" Ruffnut found Astrid scowling over a bowl of stew at the Great Hall, and slid in beside her with a tankard in hand. Astrid looked up at her and sighed.

"No one," she said, although she was thinking of a certain someone. She hadn't meant to end up here in the mead hall, but she'd hadn't remembered that she couldn't have alcohol until after she'd arrived, and so had insisted on eating some stew anyway.

"That's Loki talking," Ruffnut scoffed, "because you look like you could wrestle a sea dragon right now." The blonde tipped back her head for a drink, and had to hold onto her helmet so it didn't fall off. "So, what's Useless done now?"

Ruffnut was the only one who could still get away with using Hiccup's old nickname, and only with Astrid in private, because there was something about 'girl talk' that allowed them to talk about their husbands in such ways. Astrid could think of several things that Useless had done, but she couldn't talk about any of them. She picked at her wooden bowl with a fingernail. "Nothing," she said. The bite in her voice was practically shouting her bluff.

"Oh," Ruffnut smiled and took another drink. "Well, this has gotta be juicy stuff, if you're not exploding on anyone yet."

Astrid sighed and closed her eyes. The 'secret' plan was backfiring. In fact, it was making it a hundred times worse. Oh, what the hel, she thought.

"Ruffnut, I'm pregnant," Astrid said quietly. Ruffnut's eyes went wide mid-drink, and she slammed her cup down and struggled not to spit out what was in her mouth. Somehow she managed to swallow, but came back coughing.

"You what now?!" she exclaimed loudly. Several Vikings turned to

look.

Astrid rolled her eyes and stood, grabbing Ruffnut's elbow on her way up.

Once they were outside, Astrid dragged Ruffnut around the side of the hall to a secluded spot behind Stoick's house — she knew he wasn't home, and even if he had been, he already knew about his future grandchild anyway.

"I'm pregnant," she reiterated for Ruffnut, and added; "and if you don't mind, don't go spewing it around town. Not until I say so."

"Wow. I suppose Useless really did do something this time," Ruffnut said in an astonished tone. Astrid looked affronted.

"Ruff!"

"Does he know?" The twin asked.

"Does he—" Astrid sputtered "Of course he knows! I told him the day I found out, and he hasn't stoppedâ€| stopped bugging me since!"

"Bugging you?" Ruff looked confused.

"Yes! With hisâ€| I don't know what you'd call it. He follows me around, and stares at me, and he can't stopâ€| stop smiling and he asks the most ridiculous questions about the baby, when I haven't even known about it for two weeks — it's not like I can even feel the thing yet, and he just expects me to know, and it's like I told him I'd give birth tomorrow or something, he just won't cut me any slack, or act normally, or just slow down at all! And I know it's because he's surprised, and maybe a bit worried, but forget him, I'm the one who's pregnant, what's he got to worry about? I'm the one who should be terrified, but I'm not — should I be? Is there something wrong with me? I don't know. I thought he would be the calm one in all of this but now he just won't act normal and I am just so sick of it." Astrid had begun pacing, and she didn't realize that she'd needed to rant until she was at full-speed word-vomiting. A hoard of concerns and annoyances that she'd been only vaguely aware of came spewing out for a wide-eyed Ruffnut to take in at once.

Eventually, Astrid stopped and sighed heavily, staring and blinking at Ruff. Her face cleared and she drew breath to apologize for her outburst, but Ruffnut only smirked and asked,

"Feel better?"

Astrid blinked again. "â€| Yeah."

"Good. Ranting is good for you." She allowed herself a glance at Astrid's stomach. "Both of you. Congrats, by the way."

Astrid found herself blushing, realizing that Ruffnut was the first to know outside of her family. "Thank you. Andâ€| you won'tâ€|?"

"Tell anyone? Naw. Your womb, your rules. I'll clam up until you tell me otherwise."

"Right. Thanks." Astrid looked awkwardly down at the ground, not really knowing where to take the conversation next. Ruffnut smirked and rolled her eyes good-naturedly.

"Alright, come on, I'll walk you 'round the island and back before you have to go home to Useless." She put a hand on Astrid's shoulder and the two began strolling around the base of Raven Point.

"I swear I want to make him sleep out in the lean-to, sometimes."

"It'll wear off, you just have to put up with him until then."

"Why I keep him around is beyond me."

"Well, you might've had a chance at divorce before, but now you've gone and made mini-Haddocks with him, I think you've signed up for the long haul, girl."

"Do you think it'll be a girl or a boy?" Astrid hadn't realized that she'd needed this before now. She hadn't known that baby talk was so closely intertwined with girl talk. Ruffnut laughed.

"With your luck, it might be both. That'd sure give Useless a turn, eh?"

Astrid elbowed her hard in the gut. Ruffnut, after she recovered her breath, laughed harder.

3. For the Win

**A/N: **Apparently this story is turning into a dumping ground for all of my Hiccstrid stuff? Sorry guys. I promise I'll write something else eventually. ...Though it may be a while.

* * *

><p>Hiccup had been training with Astrid for five years. After the not-so-small incident that cost Hiccup his leg, Stoick had decided it was high time for Hiccup to learn his way around weapons. The first few years had been absolute torture, because while Hiccup could make a perfect sword, axe, and hammer, he was absolutely hopeless when it came to using them.</p>

But slowly, success dawned. A natural he was not, but Hiccup was a keen learner and Astrid was a determined teacher. First, Astrid realized that he was left-handed, and started training him accordingly. He'd improved tenfold because of it, although he remained a consistent loser when it came to sparring.

The third year of training was perhaps the best and the worst at the same time for the same reason: Hiccup had finally hit his growth spurt. His larger body gave him more strength and endurance, but for a while, all it gave him was a mess of awkward, gangly limbs to make themselves targets. But after he settled into his new body, Hiccup really, finally began to get the hang of things, and improved

exponentially.

As the one overseeing his training, Astrid knew exactly how far he'd come. Hiccup's self-perception was still clouded by years of failure and a personal disinclination towards warfare, but in truth, his fighting skills were quite remarkable. He was the tallest of the teenagers, now, quick and agile despite his amputated leg. He was a left-handed fighter in a world of rights, and, should he ever have to fight someone who wasn't from Berk, Astrid knew it would give him a huge advantage. Most importantly, Hiccup had taken his weapon of choice, the sword, and embraced it. His skill level was beginning to border on mastery, although Astrid was sure he didn't know that, and wasn't going to tell him any time soon for fear of making him self-conscious.

Hiccup was, although he probably wouldn't believe it, a very good warrior. But never in all five years of his training, not even when he began fighting and sparring in earnest, had he ever, ever bested Astrid in a duel.

Until now.

It'd happened slowly, and then suddenly like lightning. They'd been battling away with swords for nearly a quarter of an hour, so that both of them were sweating and breathing heavily. Astrid had had the upper hand for most of the spar (as was common) but then, at the last second, Hiccup's eyes had lit up when he saw an opening. Before she could process what exactly was happening, he'd spun her through a sequence of flicks, swipes, and turns, and then Astrid landed on the flat of her back, Hiccup's swordtip resting at her collarbone.

The entire arena went quiet. The twins, Snotlout, and Fishlegs all paused from what they were doing. Astrid and Hiccup stared at each other, both as shocked as the other.

"Woah," Ruffnut breathed quietly.

Hiccup blinked, and couldn't help the smile that spread over his face. "Well, never thought this would happen," He said, genuinely surprised, before drawing back his sword to sheath it. He reached back down to help Astrid up and, in in his understandable rush of success, he laughed.

Astrid was livid._

Growling in leftover adrenaline, she hauled herself off the ground without Hiccup's help, picking up her sword from where it'd fallen and slamming it back into its scabbard. "Take off the armor, Haddock," She yelled at him.

Hiccup jerked back and blinked. "W-what?" He asked her, bewildered, glancing down at the leather armor that covered his chest and shoulders. "What does that have to with-?"

"I said, take it off._"

And Hiccup had never been stupid enough to ignore that tone of voice, least of all from Astrid, so he did as he was told as quickly as he could, his face a mix of hurt and confusion. No sooner was the armor clear of his shoulders than had Astrid drawn back a fist and

punched him, hard.

"Ow!" He yowled, jumping back, armor hanging from one hand while he tried to shake out his injured arm. "Astrid, why on _earth_ would you-"

"_That_ is for beating me," She growled furiously,

"You asked me to take off my armor just so you could-?!"

She wasn't listening, and drew back another fist instead. It him in the same spot, and he hissed.

"And _that_ is for _laughing at me_." She raged. He made an indignant noise and put his armor protectively in front of him.

"You beat me _all the time_ â€“ do I ever do this to you? What do you _expect me to do, you're_ the one who's been trying to get me to win against someone for five bloody-"

She was ignoring him again, and had ripped his armor out of his hands and slung it back around his shoulders. She grabbed the shoulder guards and pulled, and he stumbled toward her.

She kissed him full on the mouth, just as hard as her punches, and long enough to make up for both. Their peers got an eyeful before she finally pulled back.

Five jaws hung open in similar expressions of shock. Hiccup, understandably, was a bit more dazed than the rest. Astrid fought back the twitch in her mouth that told her to smile, and smoothed down her hair, tucking her fringe behind her ear. Face and voice now much milder, she glanced up at him and said, "And that was forâ€¦ well, you know."

In the silence that followed, she fastened up the buckles on Hiccup's armor. When she spent just a little bit longer than necessary on the buckle at his waist, he turned bright red and she pretended not to notice, but giggled inside. "Not bad, Haddock," She smacked him hard in the stomach, "just don't get used to it." She turned to leave.

Snotlout and Tuffnut came up next to Hiccup and the three boys stood there and watched her leave. Hiccup wondered if she was _trying_ to swing her hips like that.

"Man, you have the weirdest, most violent girlfriend this side of the continent," Tuffnut said as Astrid left the arena.

"Yeah," Snotlout agreed, "And she is _hot_."

And for some reason, that little comment struck a nerve that made the normally peaceable dragon rider turn and slug his cousin right across the face.

Walking away, swinging her hips as she went, Astrid heard the scuffle and finally allowed herself to smile. _That's my man._

Behind her, Snotlout was moaning nasally and Hiccup replied in an angry, snarky tone. Tuffnut 'ooooh'ed lowly at whatever he'd said,

and Ruffnut cackled.

Yeah, she'd taught him well.

4. Stoick's Revenge

**A/N: **Bear with me, guys. I usually try not to cram my OCs down peoples' throats, but these next few oneshots have been playing about in my head for a while. Hiccup kids everywhere!

* * *

><p>Stoick's Revenge. That's what they called him. No one was entirely sure how old he was when the title caught on, but people liked bringing it up whenever he did something particularly destructive, off-the-wall, or full-blown insane.</p>

Hiccup, wisely, said nothing about what they were insinuating, but the message was clear: Stoick had suffered under his son's shenanigans as he tried to raise him years ago, and now, it seemed only a fair bit of revenge that Hiccup had to suffer even more under his own son.

Of course, Stoick's Revenge's proper name was Raughar Å†Å°elin Haddock, but most people forgot that in favor of his branded title, or, as he preferred people to call him, 'Lin'.

Lin was the first child to be born from the marriage of Hiccup Haddock and Astrid Hofferson. He was so much like his father it hurt, but enough like his mother that it hurt even more. He had Hiccup's brains and Hiccup's curiosity, Hiccup's penchant for tinkering and his hair-brained ideas, all mixed in with Astrid's short temper and spitfire personality. He'd been named Raughar because he'd come into the world with the brightest, thickest head of red hair the Haddocks had seen in generations, and unlike his father, he'd kept it into maturity. He had mischievous blue eyes and a crooked smile that made them look dangerous. Freckles and dimples made the elfish image even more drastic, and from the time he could crawl, everyone knew he'd be trouble. Just how much trouble, they couldn't have guessed.

It was as if Loki himself had concocted Lin Haddock as an experiment to see how much eccentricity the peoples of Berk could put up with. They'd survived the age of Hiccup, and now they had to survive the age of his son, who stirred up just as much ruckus as his father had when he was younger. He picked up a blacksmith's hammer at the age of five, and no one had stopped him because they hadn't known better. When he was twelve, a Skrill hatchling attached itself to his hip and would become his dragon companion in years to come. Together, they would be the source of approximately three thousand, six hundred and nine and one-half headaches, forty-six explosions, innumerable grey hairs (largely donated to his parents) six house fires, four concussions, two wrecked ships, and a rather dubious incident where they'd accidentally welded a sledgehammer to an anvil.

But somehow, by some miracle of the gods, Lin survived to adulthood with all limbs intact â€“ a new record, by Haddock standards. He took up sword fighting and axe-throwing without injuring himself too terribly, and sometimes even tried to fight with both at the same time. Of course he had the best flying teachers in all of Berk as

parents, (even if he never seemed to pay attention long enough for it to do any good) so he was up in the air on his skrill, Lightning, flying circles around his peers before he'd even had to _think_ about puberty.

In dealing with Lin, his parents had developed a certain haphazard rulebook:

Rule 1: When Lin does something stupid/destructive/insane/life-threatening/dangerous, he is _Hiccup's_ son. Ergo, _Hiccup_ must deal with whatever stupid/destructive/insane/life-threatening/dangerous situation he has gotten himself into.

Rule 2: Lin is not allowed near volatile chemicals except between the hours of one and three in the afternoon with supervision provided by Gobber, Hiccup, or Toothless.

Rule 3: Under no circumstances is Lin allowed to practice weapons in the house.

Rule 4: Lin _is_ allowed to borrow his father's workshop, but not until he has fully explained every detail of his building plans to his father and demonstrated that he will not accidentally kill himself. Some projects require supervision.

Rule 5: Lin should not be allowed to stay up past midnight, especially if building materials or weapons are nearby.

Rule 6: Should Lin be grievously maimed/injured/handicapped before he reaches the age of twenty-one, Hiccup owes Astrid a new saddle, a new axe, and year's worth of fine continental wine.

Rule 7: Should Hiccup succeed in keeping Lin in once piece to the age of twenty-one, Astrid owes Hiccup permission to build a personal forge in the backyard.

The rules went into the dozens. They changed over time, and certain rules were crossed out as Lin grew older and developed a better sense of judgment. After Lin turned seventeen, Hiccup grew increasingly milder about his son's shenanigans. He was perhaps the only Viking on Berk who trusted Lin fully enough to let him be, no matter what sounds echoed from the smithy when he was working. Astrid, then, was forced to take up the role of supreme overseer and dispenser of discipline.

"Hiccup," She slammed open the door to his workshop, face a storm. Hiccup didn't flinch, and kept his hand steady as he sewed up the binding on a thick leather book.

"Hmm?" He hummed mildly, not looking up.

"_Your son_ is at it again."

"Oh? At what, the fire arrows or that welding project of his?" He asked, actually interested to know.

"I'm not sure, but he's strapped that metal contraption to Lightning again and Gobber says there's smoke coming from his shop."

"Oh, okay." Hiccup continued on stitching.

Astrid rolled her eyes to the heavens, begging strength. Eventually, Hiccup took the silent message and sighed heavily, setting down his work. He looked at his wife over the glass spectacles set on his nose.

"I take it you want me to go do something about it?"

"There's a crowd gathering, but none of them will go near the place."

Hiccup sighed. "Of course there is." He took off his glasses and stood, stepping by Astrid and toward the front door.

"I set the medical kit on the counter, you might need it," She called over her shoulder.

Countenance reeking of longsuffering, Hiccup took the kit and stepped out the door.

True to what Astrid had said, there was a crowd gathered outside, standing as far away from the smithy as possible without losing sight of it, all murmuring worriedly. Smoke billowed from the smithy, and Hiccup could hear a loud snapping sound, like lightning and metal.

"Don't you people have anything better to do?" He stomped through the crowd, elbowing past people as he went. Somewhere along the way, Gobber caught up to him. The blacksmith was getting on in years, but despite the grey hairs (or rather, lack of hair at all) his eyes still shone with a sharp mind and wit.

"'Bout time you shown up, lad," He told Hiccup. 'Lad' had remained Gobber's nickname for him even as Hiccup began to sprout his own grey hairs.

"So I've been told. How long has he been out here?"

"All mornin'."

"And Astrid said he got out that harness that he made for Lightning â€“ the metal one?"

"Aye, saw him strap the beast up in it not an hour ago."

Hiccup nodded, and continued on to the smithy. A few more steps, and Gobber stopped dead in his tracks. Hiccup paused and turned.

"Are you coming?" He asked, confused.

"Oh no," Gobber shook his mallet-hand, "I've lived this long, I'm not going to be done in now. I'll stay back here 'til you're done."

Hiccup stared, and then ticked an eyebrow. "Right, thanks for the vote of confidence." He sighed and shook his head, looking back up at the crowd. "Oh, keep your trousers clean," He snarled at them, "I'll be back," he said, voice annoyed, and pushed open the smithy door.

Lin froze where he was, helmet visor raised, thick gloves in place, a huge metal rod in his hands. He looked up at his father apprehensively. "Um," He said intelligently.

"Your mother thought you might've gone for the welding today." He closed the door and walked over casually. His son watched his face hesitantly. "You realize, you've gathered the whole village in a frightened herd up near the Mead Hall," Hiccup told him.

"Oh," Lin scowled, miffed, "Thanks for the vote of confidence."

Hiccup snorted. "So what're you up to?" He came around and peered down at the contraption his son had put together. Lin looked at him warily.

"What, you're! you're not going to yell at me?"

"As far as anyone else is concerned, I am. But between us, how about you explain what exactly you're doing with this?" He gestured to his dragon, who wore a harness lined with metal strips, a metal cord extending from the front, connected to the metal rod in Lin's hands. "_This_, and we can tell everyone about the yelling later."

"Wait," His son sounded astonished, "you _really aren't mad_?" He asked.

"Well, your mother certainly is, as is Gobber, your grandfather, and probably the rest of the village," He told Lin. "And they've all sent me down here to deal with you like any good Viking father should, which I think entails yelling at you until your ears bleed and giving you a good beating."

"Oh," Lin managed.

"But I think you'll find things happened a bit differently," Hiccup tapped his nose, "what with how sensitive these things can be," he gestured to the occupied workspace.

"What?" Lin frowned, thick red eyebrows bearing down over his eyes in an expression he'd inherited from Hiccup himself. Hiccup nodded sagely.

"Yes. You see, when I arrived here, you'd already begun experimenting with well, whatever this is, and it was far too dangerous for me to go near safely. I tried to talk you out of it, but you were absolutely adamant that you give it at least one go before letting me speak to you." His eyes stayed on Lin, sparkling with his scheme. He continued with an unnecessary dramatic tone, "Now obviously, I have the health and safety of the village on my mind, so I couldn't possibly stop you in the middle of a dangerous operation. So I've been sitting here all this time trying to convince you stop whilst you set off your invention, to whatever unpredictable end which we may see in a few minutes, so long as you get on with it and show me."

"Oh," Lin nodded, catching on. He smiled, but it disappeared again when a thought struck him. "But isn't that still throwing me out to sea, a bit?"

"Of course it is," Hiccup slapped him on the back, "But what's the use of having children if you can't use them as scapegoat once in a while?" He smiled brightly. Lin glowered.

"I suppose I'll get my earful from mum afterward?" He asked glumly. Hiccup guffawed.

"I don't envy you."

"And you'll get out clean? After helping me?" Lin felt cheated.

"Being your dad has to have some perks, doesn't it?"

Lin rolled his eyes. "Right. Well, you might want to come stand over here," He gestured, and Hiccup stepped up onto a patch of ground that Lin had covered with what seemed to be sand. "And, just in case, here," He handed his father a pair of long, thick gloves like the ones he wore. They seemed to be made of thick leather coated inâ€¦ something. Hiccup would ask later. "Oh, and hold this in front of your face," Lin handed him a curved shield made up of wire mesh and a layer of dark glass. He realized Lin's helmet visor was made up of the same material.

"All this just to get to bits of metal together?" Hiccup asked, "Couldn't you just stick on the anvil and-"

"Just watch, dad," Lin smiled, and slammed his visor into place. He positioned two slabs of steel on a stone platform, and positioned his feet solidly in the sand, holding the rod down towards the metal. "Okay, Lightning!" He looked back at his dragon, "Let's give it a shot!" The dragon trilled happily, and suddenly, sparks danced across its hide. They caught on the metal in the harness, travelled up into the metal cord, and to the rod that Lin held. Carefully, he lowered it to the seam where the two metal slabs met.

Hiccup was glad for the darkened visor when sparks erupted from the metal, blindingly white. The sound was loud, hissing, snapping, like lightning growing and ready to strike next to his ear. Eventually, Lin told the skrill, "Okay, stop!" And the lightning died away. After a small amount of smoke cleared, Lin lifted his visor.

"Yes! Told you it'd work!" He bragged to his dragon. Hiccup lowered his eye shield and looked down at the metal. In a matter of seconds, the two pieces had been completely fused together, a seamless weld straight down the middle, neater and quicker than anything he'd have been able to make in a forge. The dragon roared triumphantly. Lin had gone over to give it a grateful scratch under the chin. The rod he held in his hand was mostly gone, melted away to a stub.

"Well, would you look at that," Hiccup muttered to himself, looking admiringly up and down the seam.

"See? A whole lot better than hammering at it for hours!" Lin bragged, beaming through a soot-smeared face.

"Indeed." Hiccup gave him a congratulatory pat on the back. After a minute for Lin to enjoy his success, Hiccup had to become a father once again. "Well done. Now â€" and I am sorry about this â€" now

comes the bit where I drag you back up the hill and turn you over to your mother."

"Oh, come on, dad," Lin slumped, "It worked," He whined, gesturing to the metal.

"Yes, it's splendid, and I'm sure everyone will thank you for it later when building projects go ten times faster," he said, "But it doesn't change the fact that you've scared everyone out of house and home. Now, come on, I have to look angry and authoritative."

"Can't you just go out and tell them that it worked?" Lin begged.

"Yes, but not right now. Right now I have to uphold the disciplinary order in my house and show everyone that I can control my own son." He gave a dismissive expression. "Whatever that means. Now go on, put on your best defiant face."

It wasn't really that hard for Lin to do, although Hiccup had to work at his stern face a bit more. He stomped out of the smithy, a hand wrapped around Lin's bicep, and dragged him up the hill to the Haddock house, a good angry-father show for all the rubbernecks.

"Get Lightning out of that harness, will you?" He told Gobber loud enough for everyone to hear, and then, just for the blacksmith's ears, "and take a look at what he did. You might want to take notes," which made Lin break character to smile. Hiccup kicked him in the shin, and he quickly recovered his frowning, defiant face.

When they got to the house, Astrid was waiting. Her yelling echoed loud enough for those outside to hear. Lin took the brunt of it, as he had many, many times, and eventually retreated to his room, confined for the rest of the day.

Downstairs, Astrid breathed deeply and brushed back her hair. Hiccup came up and wrapped his arms around her from behind. After she heard Lin's door shut, Astrid's anger miraculously melted and she became suddenly curious.

"So," She put her arms over her husband's, "did it work?"

"Yes, actually, it did," he told her cheerily, chin perched atop her head.

"And the harness was toâ€¢?"

"Conduct the Lightning'sâ€¢ well, his lightning, as far as I can tell. It welded the metal together very neatly."

"I knew it," Astrid hissed triumphantly. Hiccup smiled. As a principle, he did not keep secrets from his family, but he had never bothered to tell his children that, after twenty years of marriage, their parents had rubbed off on each other considerably. Among other things, Astrid had developed a keen, independent interest in Hiccup's (and, by intension, Lin's) experiments.

"I'm sure Lin's grateful for your, eh, excitement." Hiccup said.

"Oh, shush. Someone has to make it look like this family isn't completely mad. Besides, we all yelled at you when you were his age, and you've turned out alright."

"Helluva lot of good it did to stop me," Hiccup muttered under his breath.

"It's building his character," Astrid insisted. "Now come on, I want to go see what my brilliant son has done this time, let's go," She tugged her husband's hand toward the door.

"No, no," Hiccup stopped her before she could get to the door, "You're the one who's obsessed with people seeing us as an orderly family, and the whole village is still out there, ogling."

"Fine," Astrid huffed, "then show me tonight."

"What, you want to sneak out to the smithy after dark?" He smirked. "As if Lin won't notice."

"He won't," She said, coming up and putting a hand against his salt-and-pepper whiskers. "Because tonight, you and I are going to be so insufferably mushy that he flees in terror," she gave him a peck on the lips, "and then we can sneak off while he hides."

Hiccup snorted and shook his head. "And here I thought I was the one who had a plan for everything."

"Don't flatter yourself." She yanked on the braid he kept behind his ear, and turned away. "You had to learn from me, first."

"Mmhmm," He shook his head, and walked away toward his workroom. "I don't suppose you'll ever let Lin know that you approve of all his tinkering?"

"Oh, once I think he's had his fill of being yelled at, I might."

"It could be a while, then,"

"Maybe," she said, "but I might miraculously come around sometime soon."

"Oh really?" Hiccup was surprised. "And how will you explain the sudden change of heart?"

"Well I can't let you two have all the fun, can I?"

Hiccup laughed.

If the Haddocks were mad, at least they were mad together.

5. Useless

A/N: We interrupt your normal Hiccstrid programming for a special movie!angst drabble

* * *

><p>Hiccup's heart was beating fast, and hard.</p>

Since before he could remember, Hiccup and his father had been at odds with each other. They were so different, so alien to each other. Hiccup could never be the viking son that Stoick wanted, and Stoick could never be the father that Hiccup needed. So they fought. For years, they fought, over and over, over the same things, in the same raised voices, with the same consequences and the same anger and hurt hidden just beneath their mutual stubbornness.

But no matter how he yelled, no matter how angry he grew, Stoick had never, ever laid a hand to hurt his son. In all fourteen years of his life, no matter how they fought, Hiccup had never been truly scared of his father.

Until now.

Hiccup wasn't scared - he was terrified. He'd heard what his father had said to the others, the way he'd looked at Toothless and at him. Stoick's hand was wrapped around Hiccup's arm, dragging him - really dragging him, so he stumbled and his feet couldn't always touch the ground - toward the Great Hall. Somewhere along the way, he spotted his classmates watching them pass, and even Snotlout was silent, looking actually scared for his cousin, because he'd finally done something to tip the scales. But forget tipping the scales; Hiccup had knocked them completely over, blown them off the table and sent them clattering to the floor.

It occurred to Hiccup that Stoick could snap him like a twig. Nevermind that he was Hiccup's father, if he wanted to, it wouldn't take much for Stoick to let out his anger with fatal consequences. Something uncomfortable in Hiccup's gut protested at how morbid the thought was, how Stoick would never do something like that, surely.

But then, surely, Stoick must've thought to himself, surely Hiccup would never have the audacity, never the stupidity, to rebel so much that he actually ended up on the wrong side of the war. Surely.

And yet, here they were.

So even if Stoick didn't break through his usual temper into berserk on his son, Hiccup knew that his life was over. They'd banish him, or kill him, or ship him off tied to a mast. They'd turn him over to the world to die. Faced with the reality of it all, Hiccup realized he wouldn't mind so much if only he had Toothless with him. As things stood, he was alone, with only an iron grip around his arm, a deep dread in his belly, and the knowledge that, no matter what his father was about to say to him, it would be the last thing Hiccup heard him say. Death or banishment, he would never see his father again.

By the time Stoick flung open the doors of the Great Hall and tossed Hiccup inside, by the time Hiccup scrabbled against the floor in an attempt to get back up and away, as their last fight began truly in earnest, Hiccup realized that he had absolutely nothing to lose any more.

So this last time, when Stoick started really yelling, Hiccup yelled back. It was like yelling at a stone wall. So he kept yelling. And

then came the moment where the chief stopped listening altogether and stormed out, deaf to his son's pleads.

He had nothing to lose, Hiccup reminded himself.

They'd never laid a hand on each other before, not when they were fighting. But now, Hiccup breached the record first, grabbing onto his father's arm in a last-ditch effort to get him to listen. With laughably little effort, Stoick turned, lifted his arm, and threw his son hard to the ground, so that he sprawled out and had to recover.

And then came the verdict, and Stoick and Hiccup parted ways, no longer father and son.

Hiccup knew the law. He knew he had one full day to take himself off the island. He also knew that his one real chance of surviving elsewhere, his only friend, had been enslaved by the man who he'd once called father. And all of it, both his fate and his friend's, all of it was because of him.

He had nothing. He watched Stoick steer his ship and the whole fleet away from the docks, toward a fate they didn't understand. They didn't understand, but Hiccup had seen it. He knew that none of them would be coming back. His father, Gobber, his uncle, the tribe that was no longer his. He knew they'd all be killed the moment they broke into the mountain. By law, they were no longer his tribe. By law, he had no reason to care.

But he was Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III. No matter if Stoick somehow survived and came back to disown him all over again, no viking would ever strip Hiccup of who he was; that scrawny, good-for-nothing, reckless viking who took everything and turned it upside-down.

So maybe, he'd turn everything upside down one more time. It was stupid. Crazy. But he couldn't just let them go to their deaths. He wouldn't.

In the end, all he needed was a little push.

And that's how Hiccup the Useless, a disowned, traitorous, dragon-riding viking, took a three hundred year long war and turned it on its head.

6. The Suit

He wasn't sneaking, he told himself. Just... being cautious. But then, merely cautious people weren't usually prone to jump in surprise, which Hiccup did, quite violently, when Gobber appeared at the top of the stairs.

"Oh, hello, Hic," The older viking said, clambering down. He glanced at the bundle in Hiccup's arms. "What d'ya have there?"

"I, uh, what, this?" Hiccup glanced down. "This, uh, t-this isâ€¦ nothing, justâ€¦" He began shuffling it in his arms, trying to hide any obvious and incriminating bits. "Just a project I've been working on, it's not reallyâ€"

"Well, why don't you lay it out here, see what you've got," Gobber gestured cheerily.

"Oh, what? No, no, that's uh, that's okay," Hiccup fidgeted and smiled a bit too wide. "I was actually just going to head up the house and finish it thereâ€| almost lunch time anyway," He said.

"Well, I have food here, don't I? Now come on," Gobber came closer, and Hiccup started to get actually uncomfortable.

"Wait a minute," Gobber frowned in light confusion as he actually looked at the thing in Hiccup's arms. "I know this, this is that continental leather I bought you last month. You said you were making Astrid a new saddle for her birthday," Gobber said suspiciously.

"Well, I- I did, actually," Hiccup would've scratched back of his neck nervously, but his hands were full, so he adjusted his 'project' nervously instead. "I finished that a few days ago, but, well, there was some left over, so I was just working on... this."

"And what is this, exactly?" Gobber crossed his arm-and a half.

"Oh, you know, not much," Hiccup said in a tone that he hoped sounded casual. "Just some extra flying gear, improvements on what I've already got for Toothless, you know. It is nice leather, didn't want to waste it."

"Uh-huh." Gobber deadpanned. It was nice leather, and so he knew that Hiccup wouldn't waste in on a 'oh, you know, nothing' project. "It finished?" He peered at the bundle.

"What? No, I still have to go andâ€| no, not finished." Hiccup said.

"Yes, and I'm the Holy Roman Emperor. Buckles and all, it's finished alright, but what is it?" Gobber came closer.

"Really, Gobber," Hiccup tried to dissuade him, "It's nothing, it's just aâ€| pet project, it's not anything crazy or-"

"Your pet projects are always crazy, that's why I need to know." Gobber fished around in the bundle and grabbed a bit that was sticking out. "Now what's," he yanked "this?" It came out in a heap, and of course he would grab the most identifiable piece of the lot.

Gobber stared at it for a moment, and then back up at Hiccup, who was biting his lips and trying very hard to look unassuming.

"â€|Alright," Gobber said after a while, and set the thing aside. He looked to what remained in Hiccup's arms. "And what about that?" He pointed. Hiccup sighed.

"Gobber, really, you don't have to-" but it was halfhearted at best, because of course, Gobber would anyway. He snatched the remaining bits of Hiccup's project and held it out to look at. He took a long moment to look at it, then at Hiccup, then back at it. He picked at bits and pieces, and eventually discovered the one feature that

Hiccup was hoping he'd miss.

"Hiccup," He said, lowly and dangerously, "is this what I think it is?" He glared up at his apprentice, whose big green eyes were doing their best to look innocent. He bit his lip a moment before blurting,

"Probably not."

Gobber sighed. "What is it, then?"

"It's, well, it'ssshhwweeuuhhhhâ€|" Hiccup stared at the thing, his sharp mind failing him utterly on ideas.

"Flying gear, did you say?" Gobber shook the leather for emphasis. Hiccup looked up at him, expression a confirmation. "And does it _work?_"

"â€| I don't know."

"You don't _know?_"

"I haven't tested it yet!" Hiccup said defensively.

"And how, exactly, are you going to test _this_?" He held that _one particular bit_ up for Hiccup to stare at.

Slowly, Hiccup looked back up to Gobber, shrugged, and smiled, like: _well, how do you think?_

Gobber pinched the bridge of his nose. "Thor give me strength," He muttered. "Hiccup, you can't just keep _doing _this!_"

"Doing what?" Hiccup spread his arms.

"This!" Gobber shook the leather 'project'. "Goin' about, making _'projects'_ and testing them without _telling anyone_. You'll kill yourself, one day!"

"Gobber," Hiccup protested, rolling his eyes, "It'll be _fine_. "

"Oh, _fine_, is it? Were you fine last time, when you tried out that new leg contraption of yours?"

Hiccup slumped. "That was just a problem with the rivets on the saddle, but after that, it worked perfectly fine-"

"You _cracked three ribs_, and Toothless couldn't extend his wing for four days!"

"Well, we were only ten feet off the ground, it could have been worse!"

"And exactly how far off the ground will you be for this one, then?" Gobber asked.

"I, uh, pffersâ€|" Hiccup stuttered and slurred, looking uncomfortable. He was looking at the ground. "Maybeâ€| maybe a bit higher," He admitted. Gobber sighed.

"See, this right here is what I'm talking about," He wagged his fake hand at Hiccup.

"Gobber, it really will be alright â€“ Toothless will be there the entire time, so,"

"And where will he be in all of this? Falling to his death?"

"No," Hiccup said obviously, "I installed that autoflight clamp last week, it works great, not even a loose rivet. He'll be there the entire time to make sure nothing goes wrong."

"And if it does go wrong?" Gobber wanted to know.

"Wellâ€¦ we are going pretty high, but, but that's a good thing â€“ the longer fall means that there'll be more time for Toothless to catch me."

"Uh huh," Gobber laughed humorlessly, "the last time he caught you, he took off your leg!"

"Yeah, and it's made of metal now," Hiccup gestured helpfully, "he can't exactly take it off twice!"

"Ugh! You're just like your father, stubborn as a rock!" Gobber tossed his hands in the air. He turned away angrily, trying to find something to say that Hiccup would actually hear. He couldn't think of anything.

"Please, Gobber," Hiccup pleaded, "It really will be fine."

Gobber knew he ought to be hard-nosed with the boy. Hiccup was far too reckless as it was, and needed to be told 'no' every once in a while when his own ambition got too big for him to handle. But Gobber had a lifelong fault in that he was soft on the boy, so eventually he rolled his eyes pleadingly to heaven and turned around. Hiccup's eyes were big, green, and stupidly, damningly pleading.

Gobber drew a slow breath, glaring all the way, until he picked up Hiccup's new gear and dumped it back in his arms.

"This conversation never happened," He said evenly. "I have never laid eyes on that, and you have been gone all morning. If there are designs hidden somewhere in your workdesk, I don't know about them."

"Oh, thank you, Gobber!" Hiccup beamed and threw himself at the smith. Gobber looked like he might want to shoot himself in the foot, but he patted Hiccup back anyway.

"If you go and get yourself killed out there," Gobber pulled back gruffly, "I'm not fishing your sorry arse out of the ocean, funeral rites be damned.

Hiccup's smile dropped and he looked offended. "Oh, well aren't you a little ray of sunshine." He shook his head and picked up his gear. "It'll be fine, Gobber, I promise!" He said, and jogged out to where Toothless was waiting. "Come on, bud, let's go give this a shot!" He

said, stepping into the fitted leather chaps and shoulderguards. He dusted off his helmet and moved to mount up.

Toothless cast a look over at Gobber. _He's completely mad, I have nothing to do with it,_ it said.

"You let him ride you, you have everything to do with it," Gobber muttered, though he actually felt sorry for the fury. Oblivious to the worry in both of his friends' faces, Hiccup hooked himself into the saddle with a whoop of joy, and he and Toothless took to the skies. Gobber knew they'd fly far enough where no one could see exactly _how_ dangerous their maneuvers were becoming, but Gobber knew. He scowled and turned back to his work. He could _feel_ his mustache turning grey.

* * *

><p>When they returned that evening, Gobber was up waiting for them. Their landing looked rough and awkward, like Toothless was still flying by himself, without Hiccup's help. Hiccup's helmet was gone, and his hair was sticking up wildly in all directions. Gobber frowned in confusion as Toothless came jogging up to into the shop, Hiccup still on his back, all the way to Hiccup's workroom, where the boy jumped off with questionable grace. "Thanks, bud," Gobber heard him say. The smith hobbled over.</p>

"Hiccup? You alright, lad?" He did a double take when he realized that Toothless' tail was locked in a fanned-out position, so he could fly on his own. He went over to the saddle and unclamped the lock. Toothless snorted appreciatively. "What happened?" Gobber asked.

Hiccup was rummaging loudly. "Uhh, well," He didn't sound too proud of whatever was about to come out of his mouth next. He appeared in the door, arms around one of the pairs of crutches that he kept stashed for emergencies. Gobber realized that he was missing his left leg. Again.

"Well," Hiccup said, cheeks burning, "I, uhâ€œ! I _did_ fall. And Toothless _did_ catch me." He sniffed. "And yeah," He sighed, the admission tasting like vinegar, "he _did_ _take off my leg. Again." He scooted past Toothless and crutched himself over to the anvil, where he began picking pieces of steel together.

"And what happened to your leg?"

"Wellâ€œ! I suppose some scaldrun pup has it as a chew toy by now."

Gobber was stern, but not cruel. He didn't bother saying 'I told you so', but instead, "Hiccup, you can rebuild it tomorrow, go get some sleep."

"No, if I go home like this," Hiccup gestured to his leather gear, his missing leg and crutches, "Dad will ask questions, and when I have to tell him, he'll freak. You know how he is withâ€œ! with me _falling_," which was a fact. Ever since the battle years ago, Stoick didn't like to contemplate his son falling from any high place, dragons aside.

Stoick sighed in a longsuffering way. "Yes, actually I do. Which is one of the many, innumerable reason," He said, bending over and rummaging beneath a work bench, "I decided to start keeping some of these around." He pulled out a bucket that clinked with metal pieces, and handed it to Hiccup. The boy peered inside, and his eyes lit up. There, disassembled but in complete pieces, was an identical replica of his prosthetic. He beamed.

"Gobber," He looked up, eyes crinkled in an irresistibly infectious smile, "Thank you!" He launched himself in a hug again, but it was quickly spoiled because the one-foot wonder lurched to the side.

"Yes, yes, you can sing my praises when you're not put under house arrest tonight. Now go on, put it together and get out of my shop."

Hiccup was still smiling despite Gobber's gruffness. Toothless helped his friend to sit down on the floor, and wrapped himself around Hiccup as the boy started to assemble a new leg. Gobber was heading back upstairs when he heard Hiccup say,

"What d'you say, bud? Wanna try again tomorrow?" Gobber froze at the top of the stairs. Not again, surely.

Toothless growled in an alarmed tone. Hiccup scoffed.

"Oh you big baby. It'll be fine." He grabbed a wrench and screwed a few bits together. After a moment, he paused, and said to Toothless thoughtfully, "You know, if I do end up falling againâ€¦ just be sure to catch that leg, okay, bud? Don't want to lose anything else."

A million different horrible scenarios ran through Gobber's mind before he had to shake himself. As he got ready for bed, he mad himself think of everything but Hiccup and Toothless and his own worry and exactly how close to Valhalla he'd be if Stoick ever found out he didn't tell him half of what his son did around here.

"I'll have ten new grey whiskers by morning, Hic," He muttered quietly, even though Hiccup couldn't hear. Tinkering echoed upstairs from where Hiccup chatted with Toothless in a private language. "And they'll all be your fault."

7. Upside-Down

A/N: Dramatic music makes me write dramatic things. Blame Audiomachine. Also, if you're curious about my headcannon on Toothless' family and his pre-HtTYD dragon life, you can read up on it in my story Umbreytingu.

* * *

><p>It all happened faster than his mind could record. There was the Queen, shouting curses and threats as she chased, threats that made his heart beat with actual fear because he'd feared her for so long. But then Hiccup's Norse would break the hypnotic mantra and spur something in Toothless' brain so he could keep going, and ignore Her, just long enough to survive.</p>

The divebombing, the dodging, it'd all been instinctual up in the air. He had never before fought another dragon with the intention of killing. He wouldn't have time to think about the gravity of it all until later. When his prosthetic tailfin caught fire, he didn't register the fact that it signaled death for both of them. He just dove, straight down, air whistling around his wings and shaking his chest when She pumped her wings to drive after them. His eyes had grown wide in terror, terror so paralyzing that he'd forgotten to draw his third eyelid for protection and now his vision was clouded from the wind. Falling, falling, and roaring, and then Hiccup yelled and Toothless followed a plan that had somehow fallen into place without words. He turned, swallowed his fear, and spat it back out as blue flame.

It worked, and he had a moment to realize it before his heart seized up in fear once more, because he was flying — no, falling — upside-down with his back to the wind. It was something all dragons knew to avoid, being upside-down. The wing's downstroke was tenfold stronger than the backstroke, and even hatchlings knew that. Toothless swung out with his tail, but it was half gone already.

Then Hiccup, throwing his meager weight around with all his strength, tipped gravity just enough so Toothless spun around and caught his wings full of air. For a moment, they sailed backwards, and up. Toothless did not see the impact, but he heard it, and felt it. A current like a boulder hit him in the chest and tossed him upward. Then, a sound like an earthquake and an ocean at once, a glow cast up on the clouds, growing, bright, angry. And heat. Toothless threw his wings forward, back, twisting to compensate for his missing tail, trying to escape. The power of the upstreams carried them faster than the flames, but then, there was no air left to steer from, and only heat coming up fast. Hiccup cried from the saddle, and Toothless felt his tail jerk and snap where the prosthetic finally fell free. Somewhere between the fire, the tail, and the hard, dead club of the queen's tail, Toothless realized that they would both die.

He felt a horrible snap against his side when they struck, and when he turned, Hiccup was falling into the flames. They were both doomed, but Toothless didn't have to think about what he did next. He pulled at the air, feeling the lameness of his tail, the heat rising to his face, and he fell as hard as he could, eyes trained on Hiccup.

As he fell, the roar of the fire died away, and for some ridiculous, strange reason, a memory rose in his ears instead.

"_I'm doing it, mama, look!"_

His first time flying.

"_That's the way, Little 'Lin!" she'd sung at him, and his father pulled alongside to nudge him back up when his wings dipped. Then, his uncle swooped past them, sailing smoothly in an upside-down dive, laughing when his father called out to him._

"_Wow!" He'd said, full of childish wonder. "Can I try it, mama? Can I fly upside-down?"_

"_No," she'd said uneasily, "you must never do that, Ælvin," She'd

said seriously, "it is much too dangerous."—

"But how does Uncle do it?"—

Toothless tucked his wings against the hot updrafts that tried to keep him away, and turned his head up and back to keep his eyes on Hiccup. His fear flared as his back tipped toward the ground, the air racing like chains around his wings.

"You can fly upside-down one day, 'Lin,' his uncle had promised him,

—

He saw Hiccup, coming closer, and kept his wings pinned tight to his sides.

"But first, you must find a flying partner to fly with you, to make sure you do not fall."—

He stretched out his neck, reaching for Hiccup's nearest leg even as the flames raced up impossibly fast to meet them.

"But what if your flying partner falls?"—

He bit, hard enough to pull the boy back quickly. Toothless turned his back fully to the ground, the fear of falling replaced by fear for Hiccup's life.

"Then you must catch them."—

He didn't know what he'd intended to do, but he couldn't draw his wings back, because he was falling upside-down. He couldn't fly anywhere. Hiccup was in his grasp, but the fire was coming up quick, the ground right behind it.

"Even if it means flying upside-down?"—

Not knowing what else he could do, Toothless tightened his grip and helped the wind take his flight light every dragon feared, wrapping his wings around himself just as the flames hit his back. Useless for flying, he knew, but fireproof, and around Hiccup. That was what mattered.

"Especially then."—

He closed his eyes tight against the heat. They fell.

"But what if then, you both fall?"—

His uncle had never answered the question.

8. The Race

When he (finally) hit his growing spurt, Hiccup shot up like a reed. He was past six foot before Fishleg's second chin had sprouted a single whisker, and then suddenly he had a jawline and shoulders, too. Sure, he was still a walking noodle, but truly, he was the finest and most handsome noodle in the northern hemisphere.

It wasn't a real surprise that Hiccup had ended up so tall, or even

that he'd ended up so handsome to look at. After all, Stoick _was_ his father, and no matter how weedy the boy had been since birth, most people reasoned that the genetics had to show up _eventually_. But even though many of the Vikings had been expecting it, and maybe placing bets on it, (Gobber had started it, they'd all swear when Stoick found out) when it actually happened, no expectations could keep people from watching. And staring. And flirting, though Hiccup would see the flirting for what it was. (Astrid would. The trend would not continue long.) The point is, all of Berk was completely distracted because Hiccup Haddock had suddenly become a great, noodlish piece of eye candy.

Therefore, no one at all was focusing on Toothless.

Years later, when he began travelling the world and learning about different worlds and people and dragons, Hiccup would find out that Toothless was, by dragon standards, the same age as he was. He would also learn that, unlike humans, dragons did not grow up slowly, but in several large spurts somewhat similar to human puberty. (However, after Toothless and Hiccup compared notes, they would decide that human puberty was entirely more traumatic, horrible, and generally uncomfortable than whatever dragons went through). When Toothless was a very young hatchling just a few months from the egg, he had exploded in size. He'd been roughly the same size since then, the slender, catlike dragon that Hiccup had known and loved for so many years. But now, just as his human was (finally) shooting up in size, Toothless was nearing his next growing spurt, too.

Unfortunately, no one knew. No one knew what full-grown night furies looked like, no one knew that Toothless was one of the few dragons on Berk who still had growing to do. No one knew that it would happen all at once, and no one knew that it would happen just after Hiccup did his growing up. It began like this:

"Nnnnngghh," Hiccup groaned when his foot smacked against one of his bedposts for the seventeenth time that morning. Being tall was an agreeable development on the whole, but he really did need to take time and build himself a new bed. He'd been avoiding the task for weeks because he knew that once Stoick learned what he was building, he'd start insisting that he build a large bed, large enough for two people, in preparation forâ€| well. And Hiccup just wasn't ready to deal with his father's clumsy hints at that, so he didn't bother. He had eight purple bruises to show for it so far, but it was only the one foot â€" his left could hardly give him trouble. He could suffer his bedpost's abuse a little longer.

Sighing, Hiccup swung his legs over the side of his very short bed and fished around for his metal leg. He'd made it long enough for his newfound height, but the new model was giving him blisters. He knew he'd have to tough it out until he broke it in. "Bruises on one leg, blisters on the other," he sighed. "This whole 'tall' thing might be little overrated, bud."

Toothless mumbled sympathetically from his bed, eyes closed. Hiccup stood and shuffled toward the door, resigned that he wouldn't get any more sleep that morning. He tripped over Toothless' misplaced tail on the way there.

"Toothless," he growled, because this happened often, "Tail to yourself," he kicked it for good measure, but paused suddenly when

he turned to look at the dragon. Toothless was whining to himself, drawing up his tail and re-tucking his wings. He was sleeping in the same way he always slept, butâ€œ had he always taken up that much room? His claws were getting peculiarly long, Hiccup thought. But then the boy blinked, the oddity passed, and Hiccup left without another thought.

But then the topic came up again a few days later, when they were flying around Raven point. "It's not my fault," Hiccup growled when Toothless smacked him with his ear. Hiccup looked back at the tail and tried to adjust, wondering what he was doing wrong. Toothless grumbled something, and Hiccup glared. "No it's not. I practiced with this foot for hours.Days. It shouldn't be doing this." But no matter what Hiccup did, no matter how Toothless fluttered his wings and tried to stop, the dragon's wings tipped ever so slightly and they keeled to the left at a steady, unstoppable pace. Eventually, both annoyed and frustrated, they landed back on Berk and Hiccup stomped back to see what was wrong with the tail. When he saw it, his frustration evaporated into confusion.

"Woah," He said, eyebrows going up. "You growing a bit, bud?" He kidded, turning to look at his friend. Toothless turned to look at his own tail, and tilted his head in surprise. "No wonder I can't steer it, look at it! It's way too small for you." The tail was indeed too small for Toothless. It'd served the duo well since the day Gobber had made years ago, but now the bright red prosthetic was a good six or seven inches behind its fleshy black twin. "Well, there's our problem, let's see if we can do something about that." Hiccup removed the prosthetic and tucked it under his arm. When he brought it into the smithy and explained the problem to Gobber, the older smith had chuckled and commented that Toothless must've turned puberty into a race. Hiccup didn't know what to make of that, so he'd ignored the comment and gotten to work on a new tail. He didn't know how accurate Gobber's description would become.

In the days and weeks that followed, their respective growing spurts did become something of a race. As Hiccup finished growing taller, Toothless grew longer. As Hiccup filled out his new, wider shoulders, Toothless put on muscle weight on his chest and in his legs. When Hiccup's hands became longer and nimbler, Toothless' wingtips grew so long that the tips began to curl up when he flew. Hiccup's jaw hardened, and the next day, people began commenting that Toothless' face looked bonier than usual, more filled out. At the same time that Hiccup began sporting a five o'clock shadow, he noticed that six new scaly nubs had begun sprouting off of Toothless' jawline, as if the dragon were trying to grow a dragon-y beard.

"Alright, this getting ridiculous," Hiccup burst weeks after the race began, glaring up at his friend. Of course, Toothless had always been taller than him, but not this much taller. Nowadays, if the dragon really straightened up and tipped his head, Hiccup's nose reached to the base of the fury's throat. Toothless' smug attitude made it even more annoying than it already was for Hiccup, who now had to look up at his dragon stubble and his dragon-smirk beyond. "I've replaced my foot, my bed, your tail, your saddle, your harness, your bedâ€œ we can't keep this up, bud!" He tossed his hands out. "Look, if this is some sort of weird game of yours, you win, alright?"

Toothless thrummed like he'd be waiting for this, and bumped Hiccup victoriously in the chest. The Viking didn't quite fall over, and

shoved the dragon's face away. He scowled as Toothless licked him affectionately. "Yeah, yeah, you win. Now lay off, alright? Next I'll have to build a new house for the two of us, and I'm just not ready for that sort of commitment with you," he deadpanned, glaring. Toothless laughed.

Of course, Toothless had no more control over his own growth spurt any more than Hiccup had over his. But the coincidence of it all would forever make it seem like a grand race between dragon and rider, as if each of them were in locked in a perpetual quest to one-up the other and become the most dramatic, dashing fellow on Berk before their dorkiness returned permanently.

Of course, even if it had been a spat of some sort, if the two friends had become rivals in the throes of newfound adulthood, no one in all of Berk would have minded â€“ particularly the women.

Astrid bit down on her lip again as Hiccup walked by, bickering with his dragon. He probably hadn't noticed, but he'd begun outgrowing his clothes again. He wasn't quite to the awkward stage of ill-fittedness yet, but his clothes had definitely become a bitâ€œ illuminating. The view was worth staring for, and Astrid's eyes followed him so closely that she nearly fell over when she turned her head to watch him walk into the forge. He disappeared and the spell was broken. Astrid caught herself last minute and scoffed, complaining to Stormfly about Hiccup's inconsiderate timing. Astrid didn't speak dragonese, but if she had, she would have understood her dragon's voice of complete understanding.

Apparently, Toothless had become quite the looker, too.

The growing race between Hiccup and Toothless would die down within a few months. Although both of looked drastically following 'The Race', they'd remained so irrepressibly ridiculous, dorky, and noodly that people forgot quickly. But Astrid never did stop stealing looks when she could. Gobber, all-seeing and all-knowing as he was, cackled about this regularly. Later that year, when Astrid started developing curves and Hiccup started staring, the old smith cackled all the louder.

The race was over. Let the staring contest begin.

9. Best

Most people forgot that Hiccup did not have a mother.

Of course, it was easy to remember that Stoick's wife was dead. Everyone knew that Hiccup was the chief's only son (a fact that many Berkians resented), and having put two and two together, it was obvious that the two males lived alone. It was harder, however, to remember what that actually meant.

Normally, if the mother of a household died, she would have daughters who could take over for her, or else her husband would remarry. But Hiccup was an only child, and Stoick had never remarried. Both of these facts were oddities in and of themselves - in a society where big families were the norm and remarriages were often born of necessity, the chief's household broke all of the rules. There was no mistress of the Haddock house. On Berk, this was peculiar

indeed.

Hiccup was completely oblivious to how odd his family was in this way. He knew that he was different by nature of being Hiccup, but it never crossed his thirteen-year-old mind that his family was so different. He never realized that because he was the son of the chief, because he was an only child, because his mother was dead and he had no siblings and his father never remarried, his household was one of the most unconventional households on Berk.

However, in Hiccup's defense, most of Berk had grown aloof to the weirdness of it all. No one had ever actually had to think it through, how these facts all added together to create a very unconventional reality for the Chief's house. No one, that is, except for Stoick himself. Hiccup had grown up in the oddness. It was all he'd ever known, he never batted an eyelid. But Stoick knew how different his house truly was. Because Stoick was chief, he and his son had the biggest house on the island. It had multiple rooms and luxuries and privacies that no one else on the island would ever know. However, this had been true of the chief's house for generations. The one integral fact that separated Stoick's house from all former convention was, when said, rather simple: there was not a woman in the house.

Viking women were not merely strong. They were skilled in ways that the men would never have to think about until their women left them. They cooked, they cleaned, they managed and ordered and healed and cared for, and taught each other how to do all of this from the cradle. Of course, with not a single female to its name, the Haddock household had always lacked a woman's touch. But as chief, as the leading example of the tribe, Stoick had to make sure his household was just as well-run as any. To this end, the feminine jobs of the house had always fallen on Hiccup's shoulders. From the day he was first able, Hiccup adopted the womanly chores and responsibilities of the house in place of the mother he did not have.

Hiccup's peers might've been surprised to hear that he didn't actually mind doing the 'woman's work'. He'd been raised into it, so he knew no different, and he didn't think it was odd, so he never complained. He did not know that sons did not normally do the laundry on washing day, he did not realize that it was a woman's job to clean the dishes and make sure the cooking fire was hot enough at mealtimes. He had no mother and no sisters, so he'd never been taught that cooking could mean more than sticking a fish on a spit and roasting it until it was safe to eat. His grandmother Gothi had taught him how to treat fevers, cuts, bruises and ailments when he was still very young, but she hadn't told him that he was the only boy she'd ever taught. Hiccup would not realize it for many years, but so long as he was inside the four walls of his house, his actions were that of a boy and a girl at once. He had become the family's matron, because his mother was dead, and had left him no sisters.

He didn't mind, really. It was all he knew, and what he did in his own house was his own business. None of his peers would notice, much less point out his bizarre domesticity to him until he was a teenager. When he was thirteen, a dragon raid (big surprise) brought down a large number of houses in the village. Most of the evicted Viking families would stay in the Mead Hall until repairs could be made, but one family's house had only been half-burned; it was still livable, but there was no longer enough room for the entire family.

So, leaving the mother and the younger siblings to their own house and what comforts it'd kept safe from the fire, the father and his eldest became the personal guests of the chief for the time being.

When Stoick told his son who would be staying with him, Hiccup had choked on his breakfast and turned very, very red. Sven Hofferson and his daughter, Astrid.

Now, at this point in his young life, Hiccup had just reached the age where it was socially acceptable for boys to start expressing interest in their female peers. However, because Hiccup was the walking definition of not socially acceptable, it was imperative to a life-and-death degree that he never let anyone know about his completely uncontrollable crush on Astrid

I'll-Kick-You-In-The-Teeth-If-You-Look-At-Me-Wrong Hofferson.

But now she was going to be living in his house for gods knew how long, and things would surely get worse than ever. So, in an attempt to distract himself and pretend that Astrid Hofferson did not exist, Hiccup stayed out of the way and devoted himself to his chores.

Stoick and Sven had left very early in the morning, along with every other able-bodied Viking in Berk, to begin repairs on the burned houses. Were she a year or two older, Astrid would've been allowed to help, but she was still in the stage of life where she was useless at heavy lifting, and would have only been in the way on a busy building site. Hiccup, of course, was resigned that he'd never be able to help with anything, because no sane person on the isle of Berk would ever want Hiccup's brand of 'help'. So, the two remained at the chief's house for the day, Astrid sulking, Hiccup trying very hard not to panic.

Hiccup walked on eggshells everywhere he went, trying to forget Astrid and trying not to sweat whenever she glared at the back of his neck. She didn't say a single word for hours, which he was fine with. He had actually successfully forgotten that Astrid was there for a full fifteen seconds before she asked him,

"What are you doing?"

Hiccup jumped and splashed water on himself in the process. He flicked the soap back into the washing tub and looked back at her, confused. "Um," he swallowed, knowing he was red in the face.
"Washing the dishes?"

Astrid frowned, looked at the dishes in the tub, and back up at Hiccup. "Why?"

Hiccup frowned at her disgusted tone. "Because they're dirty."

"But that's a girl's job," And despite the fact that she was, in fact, a girl, Astrid sounded disgusted.

Hiccup blinked at her, because this sounded absurd to him. One would think that, over the years, he would have noticed, that someone would have told him that certain jobs were meant for menfolk, and certain jobs were meant for womenfolk. However, by some fluke or by Hiccup's

own distractibility, he'd lived thirteen years without realizing the basic societal structures that defined Viking gender roles. And so, Hiccup blinked once because he was confused, twice because he was embarrassed, and thrice because Astrid's disgust made him just a touch angry.

"Um," he frowned a bit deeper, "No, it's a _someone-who-doesn't-want-eat-off-of-dirty-plates' _job."

Astrid looked at him, flustered and flecked with water as he was, and ticked an eyebrow. "Right," she said, and turned away. He watched her for a moment, and went back to work.

From a seat around the hearth, Astrid studied Hiccup. He went about his chores like a pro; like her mother or any other woman she knew. Rinse, scrub, rinse, scrub, rinse, dry, stack. He hardly had to look as he worked.

"Why do you use your left hand?" Astrid asked. Truth be told, at this odd stage between girl and woman, Astrid's tone could become incredibly patronizing. Hiccup picked up on it, and was beginning to grow annoyed. He looked at her over his shoulder as he set down a stack of bowls.

"I don't know. It's a hand. I need hands to work. I use my hands."

"But why your _left_ one?"

"I don't know! I'm better with my left hand."

"You're weird."

Hiccup rolled his eyes and put the dishes away. "Thank you for summing that up."

Watching Hiccup try to lift the bucket of dirty water up and out of the house was almost comical. Astrid would have been able to lift it with one hand, but Hiccup had to strain both of his arms to their furthest extent just to lift it off the floor, and Astrid thought it looked like his back was about to crack in half. After the long journey to the door and back, he returned with the empty bucket. He still had to use both hands.

Astrid watched him while she pretended to study her grammar book as Hiccup picked up a broom and began sweeping. She frowned further. What on _earth_ was wrong with this kid? Sweeping? Washing dishes? She was confused and almost insulted â€“ it was clear he'd never been taught how to do any of the chores properly. Astrid held her tongue on the matter until he began making lunch. Or, rather, until he skewered a fish on a stick and stuck it over a fire that was too hot. Astrid slammed her book shut, and Hiccup jumped like he'd awoken a bear.

"_What_ _are_ _you_ _doing_?" She demanded. He shrunk, eyes wide, and mustered out: "Uhhhâ€¦ lunch?" he pointed vaguely at the trout. She glanced at it.

"You'll burn it. Fire's too hot."

"O-oh. I-umâ€| well, I always do it like this, soâ€|" Hiccup glanced at the floor, playing with his hands nervously.

"Always?" She asked, perplexed, "What, you _always _cook? What is wrong with you? You don't even know how to cook, or sweep right, you can hardly lift a washing tub, why do you even bother? Just let it be and leave it to your m—" but as soon as the word appeared on her tongue, Astrid cut herself off sharply in realization. Hiccup did not realize what she'd almost said. Astrid, however, was mortified.

_Leave it to your mother. _Oh, Odin, just let the earth swallow her.

She almost wanted to smack herself for her stupidity. Of course he had to do the chores, he had no mother or sisters. And of course he wouldn't know how to do any of it right, there had been no one to teach him. Astrid was lucky enough to have both of her parents, and had always had her mother to show her how to run a household and keep things tidy. Her brothers and father, of course, never had to worry about it, and whenever they tried to help, they made things worse. Hiccup, she now realized, did not have her brothers' luxury.

Astrid bit her lip and her expression softened, almost guiltily. Hiccup was watching her with wide, terrified eyes still, oblivious to her inner revelation nor her sudden guilt. She sighed. "Iâ€| I'm sorry," She said, tucking her hair behind her ear. "Here, umâ€| let me help you."

They were words that Hiccup had never expected to hear from Astrid Hofferson, and his jaw was nearly to the ground as she got up and went over to the fireside with him. She helped him prepare lunch, and then they re-swept the floors, and mopped them, too. (She fetched the washing water so he wouldn't have to). Hiccup was hardly a help at any of this; not for lack of skill, but he was rendered completely red-faced and useless whenever Astrid came up beside him to explain something or show him how to do something. Once, she'd reached around him and grabbed his hand when he'd been about to burn himself. The contact only lasted half a second, but he'd nearly choked on his own tongue.

As they ate their food (which was more tender and delicious than whenever Hiccup tried to cook it), Astrid gave him tips on spices and stews and actual _meals_ rather than just burnt fish, and Hiccup did his best to listen attentively. In the two weeks or so that Astrid and her father stayed at the Haddock house, Astrid helped Hiccup learn all of the finesse and skills that he'd never properly learned, that normally, he wouldn't have to. Of course, in his ignorance of how a house would _normally _work, Hiccup did not fully understand why Astrid felt so obligated to impart her knowledge to him, but he was incredibly grateful. Unfortunately, he would mull over this phenomenon for weeks afterward and wonder if she, by some miracle of the gods, _liked_ him. Then, after a dragon raid where he ruined everything (again), she'd smack him with the butt of her axe and yell at him, and his perception of reality would go back to normal. Still, he now knew of a new side of Astrid that, for better or worse, made his crush all the harder to kill: she could be incredibly kind to him, if she wanted to be.

In the years to come, Hiccup's not-secret of being the Haddock family

matron got out. Hiccup himself was incredibly confused at first, because he didn't see what the big deal was. But, as the surprised expressions appeared, as the sniggering started amongst the men and boys, the embarrassment came full-force. Many of the women in the village seemed sympathetic, because they'd always wondered, and oh, yes, that made sense. Stoick only sighed, and Gobber shrugged it off. But the boys of the village (and some of the girls) made Hiccup's life hell because of it. They teased, they poked fun, they sung stupid songs and made Hiccup more unwelcome as usual. Snotlout even made Hiccup a bright, floral pink apron.

Hiccup grew to resent his chores, and that his father had never bothered to mention that it wasn't normal. He would grow red-faced with embarrassment whenever he washed the laundry, or cooked the meals. Stoick did actually apologize once, but Hiccup brushed it off. He couldn't just give up the chores, or else, they wouldn't get done. But he was bitter.

But then, once the worst of the teasing wore off, once life was (relatively) normal again, Hiccup remembered the grace and understanding with which Astrid had helped him improve. How she'd showed him how to sweep and mop without a hint of judgment, how she was so open and helpful in teaching him how to cook. Astrid was the most beautiful, accomplished, fierce, and all-around amazing person that Hiccup had ever met in his life. If she never teased him about doing womens' work, if all of these chores were as important and artful as she made them seem when she showed him, then surely, cooking and washing were some of the most noble of his daily duties. He himself take heart in the memory (even when she yelled at him along with everyone else), and decided he would try to be as good as Astrid had showed him to be.

* * *

><p>Ten years laterâ€|

* * *

><p>"You still use your left hand," Astrid said, appearing behind him. Hiccup jumped, and spilled soapy water on himself. He resumed scrubbing.<p>

"Of course I do, I'm left handed."

"Mmmhmm," Astrid said, idly scratching his back and playing with the tips of his hair. He stopped scrubbing. "Oi, back to work, Haddock."

"You're distracting me," he said, putting down his brush and wiping his hands on an old, bizarre pink apron.

"Men," Astrid huffed overdramatically, "utterly useless."

"Well, I did learn from the best," He turned and flashed her his most winning grin. She smacked him on the arm, and he flicked soap bubbles at her. She shrieked and smacked him again. He grabbed both of her hands to stop her from hitting him. "I did learn from the best," he told her, more seriously. She smiled smugly at him.

"Damn right you did."

"Humble," he remarked, and leaned forward to kiss her on the forehead. She came up beside him and helped him finish the dishes. Working on either side of the bucket so their respective left and right hands didn't bump into each other, the duo worked well and the task went by quickly. After it was all dried and stacked away, he carried the tub out and dumped the water (he could carry with one hand, now). When he returned, Astrid was at the fire, preparing fish, potatoes, and veggies. As soon as she touched the large iron pot, Hiccup darted to her side.

"No, no, no, and no, don't even think about it," he said with authority, removing her hands from the iron handle.

She rolled her eyes. "You're such a baby," she griped at him.

"No, that's a baby," he said, poking her very pregnant belly, "one who is depending on you to not crack your back in half. For now, this is all my job," he said, grabbing hold of the pot handle. She sighed.

Of course, Hiccup took far longer about heaving the pot up onto the crane than Astrid ever did, and groaned about it so that his wife rolled her eyes twice more in the space of one minute. But in the end, it was his consideration that counted. After he'd set the stew to cook, he sat down with his wife and wrapped an arm around her shoulders.

"You know," she mused, inhaling the pleasant aromas wafting from the fire, rubbing her feet gratefully against their well-kept floors, looking over across their organized, well-aired house. She turned her head to peer up at him like an old teacher to her pupil. "I think I may have taught the best," she said. He looked genuinely surprised for a moment, but then he turned his head and gave a dimpled smile. After an eyebrow tick and a sniff, he very smugly said,

"Damn right you did."

She laughed out of surprise and punched him. Then, as per tradition, she kissed him.

End
file.